

Andrew Jackson to Richard Gilliam Dunlap, August 29, 1831, from Correspondence of Andrew Jackson. Edited by John Spencer Bassett.

TO GENERAL RICHARD G. DUNLAP.1

1 Copy, Handwriting of R. E. W. Earl.

Washington, August 29, 1831.

Dear sir, Your letter of the 10th Instant is just received, and, perceiving that you are in error (as I presume) for the want of correct information on two points, I am induced, notwithstanding the press of business with which I am surrounded, to give you a reply. I thank you for the expression of your "admiration for such noble friendship" as you are pleased to assert has characterised my conduct towards my friends. But when you accord to me the justice of preserving "fidelity to friends", and applaud me for it, I must confess that I am somewhat surprised at the expression of the intimation that I should attempt to "dispel the suspicions of the times" by driving from me individuals who have been sincere in their friendship for me, and by whom I have never yet been deceived. I however indulge the hope that, when correctly advised of facts, your opinions and consequently yr. wishes on this subject will be changed.

The connection which exists between Majr. Lewis and myself, when truly understood, can do no injury with true friends, and you are sufficiently acquainted with my character to know that I am always regardless of my enemies. Every term of the Presidency there are \$14:000 appropriated by Congress for the renewal and repairs of the furniture for the Presidents house. An honest and faithfull Agent is necessary to disburse this money, and, having full confidence in Major Lewis, I have constituted him this Agent. If I had not

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him to whom else could I entrust it? My son is too young, and if he was not, it would be improper that he or any of my connections should have the Agency. Major Lewis I know to be honest, faithfull, and true to me, and therefore it is that my enemies abuse him, and complain that I have him near me. Why were not these complaints made before I left the Hermitage where he was for fifteen or twenty years an intimate in my house, had, at pleasure, the perusal of my papers, and enjoyed my full confidence? And shall I now, after the efficient Services he has rendered, drive him from me because his enemies slander and abuse him? It would be but a short time, if I was to persue this course, before I should have to seperate myself from *all my* friends. It is then my D'r sir not the best evidence of friendship which can be given to insist on the adoption of such a course. I have been, for some time, aware of the fact that Ingham, Branch, Berrien, Duff Green, and Co—the agents of Calhoun—have been secretly at work with their note Books, etc. to prejudice Majr. Lewis in the estimation of the public and my friends. I had supposed that my true friends would be on their guard, and not adopt the sentiments and slang of these men without giving some attention to the facts which stand opposed to all their assertions; and it pains me to learn that the conduct of some who have long professed to cherish the strongest attachment for me shews that they have too willingly imbibed the opinions of my enemies.

You correctly suppose that there is “no man” in this Union who would sooner denounce any interference, on the part of Executive, with the state elections than myself; but injustice is done to truth when it is suspected that I, by the conduct of Major Lewis, have evinced the least desire to control the elections. Major Lewis has positively denied any interference with state elections since he has been here and in the absence of proof to support the allegations against him would it not be unjust, ungratefull in me to determine him guilty? If any proof exists against him, the rancour with which the feelings of his enemies have been characterised, induces the conclusion that they would long since have adduced it. I have too keenly felt the injustice done by the slander of enemies to give a believing ear to the mere assertions of the enemies of any individual. I confidently believe that

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the suspicions, which you say exist, as to Major Lewis' interfering in elections are as groundless as Calhoun's plots against Van Buren (of which V. B. is as innocent as a babe) are imaginary. But I will close this subject with the remark that, if, I am to drive away and discard my friends without cause, to obtain popularity, I will not have it on such terms, and would despise myself if I even suspected that I was capable of purchasing it by such dishonourable means. But I must ask 24 where is the Patriot, that I have near or around me, who is not made a target for the vilest slander, and detraction? And when that upright man and incorruptible patriot, H. L. White, has been made the subject of the vilest charges by the profligate Arnold, (and there are many besides him that do not wear the name although equally corrupt) how can you expect that here, the focus of intrigue and corruption, either I or those around me can escape? It would not only be an unjust, as I have before intimated, but a dangerous system to abandon friends, without sufficient cause, merely because they become the object of abuse by our enemies.

The other point which I purpose noticing has reference to the relations which existed between Mr. Calhoun, Mr. Crawford, and myself and some suspicions which you now inform me, you entertained in respect to "the conduct of several of (my) suite" to New-Orleans in 1828. Every one, who has known me, knows full well the high regard I once entertained for Mr. Calhoun. Mr. Crawford was my political enemy, and Mr. Calhoun and he, at the time of the Seminole campaign and long after the decision of the subject which grew out of it, were bosom friends, and so remained, I believe, up to 1821 or '22. I had frequent, full, and free conversations with Mr. Calhoun on the subject of the Seminole campaign and denounced Mr. Crawford for the Course which I understood he was persuing against me in the Cabinet. Ought not Mr. Calhoun to have frankly told me that he was not, as I supposed him, my advocate in the secret cabinet council, and that I did injustice to his friend Mr. Crawford in respect to his conduct on that occasion? It does seem to me that a high-minded and honourable man would have done so.

Mr. Calhoun at all times and on all occasions, so far as I was then advised, professed to be my uniform and steadfast friend, and, throughout the Canvass for President,

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was regarded my *undeviating* friend, and not untill he shew to the Contrary in his correspondence with me (which he has choose to publish) was the sincerity of his *professions* ever questioned by me, nor did I even suspect that any of my friends indulged the slightest suspicion that he was not *sincerely* the warm and decided advocate of my elections. I am perfectly confident that Major Lewis never had the least suspicion of Mr. Calhoun's duplicity to me untill late in 1829.

You say “none can doubt, but that the explosion of (my) Cabinet, with its precursor *the correspondence* with Mr. Calhoun, will bring new and spirited adversaries in the field against” me, and that “how to meet them can be better ascertained by searching out the true cause which first agitated the harmony” etc. I have the pleasure to inform you, on this subject, that the task you recommend has already been performed, and you will find the result of my labours in the re-organization of my Cabinet proper. I am now relieved from an intercourse with Ingham, Branch and Berrien, who have shewn that they were unworthy of the confidence reposed in them, and regarded the interest of a certain aspirant to the Presidency more than they consulted the harmony of my Cabinet, and the consequent prosperity of my administration and the Country. By the change I have secured the services of those who are competent and *true*, and it affords me pleasure to learn that my fellow-Citizens approbate the course which their interest imperiously dema[n]ded at my hands.

You also remark that “while passing down the river (Mississippi) Majr. Lewis' mind seemed to be filled with suspicions about impending and projecting injuries awaiting (my) fate”, and that “he was as usual busy and apparently kind to” me, and that you “believed, either that he was alarmed at the phantoms of his own fancy or that he desired to ingratiate himself deep in (my) favor by his officious airs towards (my) election.” I must confess that I am not a little surprised to find that you thus “believed”, and am unwilling to suppose that, if you had been aware of the character of my intercourse with Majr. Lewis, and the then attending circumstances, that you would have been the subject of such suspicions.

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I would suppose from the tenor of your letter that you have forgotten the nature of the correspondence between Mr. Monroe and my friend Judge White in respect to a speech delivered by the latter in reply to a toast in honor of me given, by a company, on the 8th of January 1827 in this City. If you did not then know, I now inform you that this correspondence was commenced by Mr. Monroe, and that he and Southard had threatened to write a Book. It was charged or other asserted that the controversy growing out of the Seminole campaign was again to be agitated, that my violation of the Constitution and my orders was plainly to be shewn, and indeed that I had deserted my post, left the army, and was returning home, and would not have saved New Orleans, but that I was ordered back by Mr. Monroe. It was this threatened attack, not by Mr. Adams, but by Mr. Monroe to Judge White and Mr. Southard through the public journals, which Major Lewis and Col. Hamilton, I suppose, were preparing to meet. My friends at Washington were much alarmed on this subject, and, the correspondence having been made known to me, I furnished the means of defence, then at hand, to Judge White. Major Lewis was fully advised of the threats which were made, and, no doubt on this as on every other occasion, he felt anxious to obtain all the facts necessary to my defence. He was one of my most efficient friends in collecting information and preparing documents for the Nashvill committe in my defence. Now, my dear sir, as light as you have made of this matter, Mr. Monroe did intend to write (as Mr. Calhoun has done) a Book. If the impression could have been made that Mr. Monroe, in order to save New Orleans, had to order me to retrace my steps after I had started home, etc. it would have added greatly to his reputation.

Notwithstanding Mr. Monroe knew that Mr. Rhea's letter to me was burned, he perceived from my letter to Southard that I was prepared at every point, and therefore the, project of the Book was abandoned. You seem to have forgotten that Mr. Monroe had charged me with transcending my orders. We were at issue on this point, notwithstanding he approved my conduct (as he professed) on a knowledge of the circumstances which attended it. You say that "Mr. Calhoun's fidelity to (me) was alluded to before we left Nashville as being

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questionable". This is new to me and I have already said enough to satisfy you on this subject, and will only add that, as early as 1824 and '25, I was informed on high authority that it was Mr. Calhoun and not Mr. Crawford who had moved my arrest. Because of the circumstances to which I have alluded in connection with others not necessary now to mention I could not give credence to the information unless I had come to the conclusion that he was one of the most depraved. I could not believe that any man, possessing the standing he then held in society, could be so depraved as to practice such duplicity. Aside from his repeated assurances of friendship, I knew that he had not only issued my orders; but had so explained them himself as could leave no doubt of my correct interpretation of them, and, therefore could not suppose that he would secretly attempt to destroy me for acting in obedience to my orders, and accomplishing the wishes of Mr. Monroe and himself as confidentially expressed to me through Mr. Rhea. I regard the sentiments contained in Mr. Rhea's letter as expressive of Mr. Calhoun's wishes as well as those of Mr. Monroe, because Mr. C, as I believe, was fully advised in respect to the confidential letter which Mr. Rhea wrote me under the direction of Mr. Monroe.

I am truly astonished at the contempt you now express for "the Conduct of several of (my) suit" on my tour to New-Orleans. According to my recollection I had but Major Lewis and Mr Earle, who were specially invited to take charge of my family—a circumstance which would, in my opinion, have rendered any "officious airs towards (my) election" by major Lewis, unnecessary, in order "to ingratiate himself", if he had wished it, "in (my) favour"—Govr. Houston and staff (consisting of yourself and Genl. Smith and col martin as I understood) Judge Overton, Doctr. Shelley, and Mr. Donelson. I am sure that I perceived nothing, to which I should take exception, in the conduct of any of my "suit", or Col. Hamilton, who was not one of it, but acted in a higher sphere being one of the representatives chosen by the Republican's of New-York to meet and congratulate me on the plains of New-Orleans on the 8th of January. I discovered no attempt on the part of any of my suit or Col. Hamilton to obtrude upon me, and with them or Col. Hamilton I had but little or no conversation on the subject of politics from the time we embarked until

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we returned. I have no recollection of having had any conversation on the subject of Mr. Monroe's Book during the trip, and any, *at any time* on that subject with Col. Hamilton. I had no secret conversations with him, and I assure you that the matters you now detail, were unknown to me. Neither of these gentlemen attempted to arouse my fears on the subject of my election either *then* or *at any other time* , and you judge very incorrectly, if you suppose that my fears can be aroused on any occasion and particularly on the subject of the Presidency, for you, as well as all my friends know that I am here, not by my own wishes, but the will and wishes of the people. My choice is the Hermitage. I am however, at all times prepared to defend myself or friends when unjustly assailed, and I do assure you that you have done great injustice to my suit on that occasion in ascribing to them the acts and motives which you have.

I have written you in my usual frankness and hope that the facts detailed will convince you of your error. I have not time to notice the other parts of your letter. I thank you for the assurance "that (your) confidence is not in the least impaired in (my) unwavering patriotism, or the final result of the public usefulness of (my) administration," and I beg you to accept my best wishes for your health and happiness.

P.S. It seemes strange to me that my friends in Tennessee should desire me to seperate from Majr. Lewis while those of other states entertain different feelings.